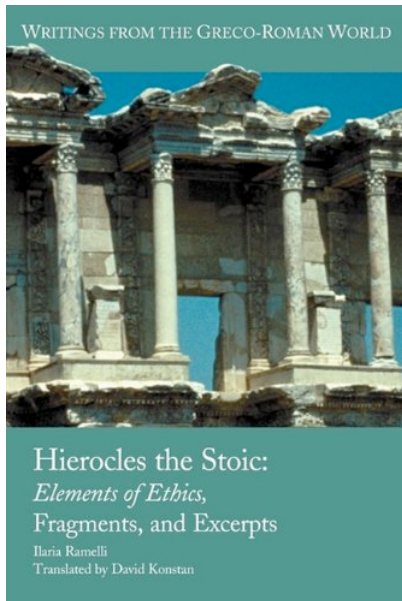


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**Ramelli, Ilaria**

***Hierocles the Stoic: Elements of Ethics, Fragments, and Excerpts***

Translated by David Konstan

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Douglas Estes  
San Jose, California

An important and very useful primary-source tool for biblical scholars, Ramelli's *Hierocles the Stoic* renders the complete works of Hierocles for the first time in English translation and includes with it extensive background material. Hierocles (fl. ca 135 C.E.) was a neo-Stoic engaged in philosophy that touched on ethics, religious devotion, family and marriage, anthropology, and epistemology, and his works allow for a greater understanding of the development of Stoic thought from Old Stoa influences to later Roman Stoicism. *Hierocles the Stoic*, originally composed in Italian by Ramelli, was translated into English by David Konstan. It is a helpful and worthy addition to SBL's Writings from the Greco-Roman World series.

There are two major sections to *Hierocles the Stoic*: an introduction to Hierocles, his thought, and his writings in the first section and Hierocles' extant texts with translations and commentary in the second section. The first, introductory section is meaty, and a good grasp of Stoic philosophy is a must. Ramelli covers the material with near-exhaustive reference notes. The second section contains both the original Greek texts of each work and an English translation. Hierocles has three extant works: the beginning part of *Elements of Ethics* (Ἠθικὴ Στοιχείωσις) as partially preserved on papyrus, selected excerpts from his *On Appropriate Acts* (Περὶ τῶν καθήκοντων) that have come down to us from Joannes Stobaeus (fifth century), and a few fragments of Hierocles in the *Suda*

(tenth century). Key Greek words are bracketed into the English translation, a useful feature. Konstan's translation is overall well-written and very readable prose. Following each translation is a short commentary formatted via endnotes supplied to the English translation. This format is a little awkward for reading but preserves the flow of the original text as endnotes do. A comprehensive bibliography and index round out the volume.

Ramelli points out that Hierocles has received little attention in scholarly literature, with a slight uptick in recent years. Prior to the twentieth century, scholars confused Hierocles the Stoic with Hierocles of Alexandria (fifth century), a Neoplatonic philosopher, and the *Elements of Ethics* had not yet been discovered. Given the paucity of clear evidences, questions do linger as to the exact identity of Hierocles and whether other ancients' works could potentially be his. Ramelli guides the reader through the history of the reception of Hierocles' extant works and introduces several of his major themes. The starting point to *Ethics* is Hierocles' development of animal οἰκείωσις (familiarization), or the self-awareness that contrasts animal life from nonanimal life (plants). The two drivers of familiarization for Hierocles are perception (αἴσθησις; cf. Phil 1:9) and impulse (ὁρμή, cf. Acts 14:5; Jas 3:4). As Ramelli notes, Roberto Radice has suggested that Hierocles' choice of animal awareness as the ἀρχή of ethics originates from a medical/biological rather than an ordinary philosophical background (xxxix). Ramelli argues that the οἰκείωσις, while not specifically mentioned in the *Acts* excerpts, is nonetheless deeply informative for Hierocles' thoughts on proper duties (καθήκον; xlix). Hierocles' appropriate duties include one's behavior toward the gods (where he contrasts Homer's characterization of the gods as soft and susceptible to human manipulation), toward one's country, toward one's family (spouse, parents, siblings, extended relatives), and toward one's management of the home. Ramelli takes time to point out traces of the Old and Middle Stoa that she believes appear in Hierocles' writings. In addition, her commentary sections contain many more observations.

Hierocles' *Elements of Ethics* and *On Appropriate Acts* is fruitful material for the study of the post-New Testament/early Christian/late classical period. Hierocles is conversant with the world of the Old Stoa, Plato, Chrysippus, Zeus, and Homer, but he also introduces fresh approaches reflecting the turn toward late antiquity. Hierocles' ethics are neither theocentric nor anthropocentric but naturalistic, wherein he opens with the biological conception of life to cast his ethical theory. This is especially important if later research proves the theory that *Elements of Ethics* is the prelude to *On Appropriate Acts*, as Hans von Arnim originally suggested (xxviii). At the very end of the surviving papyrus, barely legible, there is a clue to the furtherance of Hierocles' ethical system—that human beings are animals, yet social ones (ἐνθυμητέον ὅτι ἐσμέν ζῶον, ἀλλὰ συναγελαστικὸν καὶ δεόμενον ἑτέρου), and that people's familiarization with themselves through perception and

impulse leads people to form friendships with one another, even to the point that following war and bloodshed that goodwill can still later be established (*Ethics* 11.15–20; p. 29). The human-being-as-social-animal is in a way contrastive of the gods, who are immutable and firm (ἀμεταπτωσία καὶ βεβαιότης), paragons of the highest Stoic virtue. Hierocles' naturalistic (and possible Platonic) bent is also seen in him ascribing the second greatest source of evil in the world to matter (ὕλη), behind vice (κακία) itself. Proper duty, such as to the gods first, to country second (one's little god), and to parents/family third (secondary gods), must result first in the healing of the soul in Hierocles' biologically attuned ethics; as Ramelli notes, Hierocles is in agreement with the tradition that philosophy, with the purging of negative emotions, heals people (105–6; cf. Seneca). The familiarization, in proper duty, will lead them to respect the home as a temple and to “worship” their parents with due care and diligence even in old age (85). Hierocles includes his view of masculinity, femininity, and gender roles in the household.

*Hierocles the Stoic* is a welcome addition to any primary-source library and should be recommended as such for all research libraries. Of course, this volume will not (and should not) answer all questions about Hierocles—and while there is the potential to quibble over some of Ramelli's conclusions (e.g., Hierocles' place in Stoic thought, the relationship between Hierocles' works, and New Testament/early Christian background parallels), these are better utilized as starting points for further inquiry. Ramelli (and Konstan) are to be commended for bringing Hierocles' Stoic philosophy into a critical English edition for wider consumption.